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ART. II. — *Romans de PAUL DE KOCK*. — 1. *Sœur Anne*. 4 vols. — 2. *Le Jeune Homme Charmant*. 4 vols. — 3. *La Jolie Fille du Faubourg*. 4 vols. — 4. *Ni Jamais ni Toujours*. 4 vols. — 5. *Les Mœurs Parisiennes*. 2 vols. — 6. *Mon Voisin Raymond*. Paris. Gustave Barba, Éditeur. 1835 – 1842.

WHEN Sir James Mackintosh, in India, wiled away some of the tedious hours of exile by perusing novels and romances, of which few were good, and many indifferent, he called himself to account for such an employment of time, and, in a rather elaborate essay, endeavoured to prove that this class of works really merited the attention and serious study of the philosopher and the moralist. As these seductive books have relieved a portion of our own wakeful nights, and even pushed aside some of the grave labors of the day, we are quite willing to justify ourselves by the weight of his authority, and to seek for shelter and encouragement in his ingenious reasonings. He insists chiefly on the effect produced upon the character by contemplating the models of ideal excellence which are held up in fictitious composition, and on the wider field which the reader gains for the exercise of sympathy and the benevolent affections. We can imitate only those virtues with which we are acquainted ; we can pity only the distresses which come within the sphere of our observation. Actual experience does not always furnish a sufficient number of trying occasions, on which the mind may be purified and exalted by pity, wonder, or admiration, may be nerved for future struggles, and strengthened in virtuous resolves. The effect of scenes in fiction is fainter, it is true ; but the lesson may be repeated as often as we please ; and, at any rate, it is so much added to the school of real occurrences. Opportunities for the exercise of the heroic virtues are certainly rare ; but it is an important point in moral culture, to provide for the growth of heroic sentiments ; and here the poet and the novelist are often the most successful teachers.

It may at first appear, that these remarks are not very applicable to the novels of the present day, in very few of which do we find any exhibition of estimable characters, or of noble principles of conduct. The writers of them care

nothing about the moral effect produced, and aim only at creating a momentary interest in their fictitious scenes. Still, there is an undoubted tendency in imaginative writing to exalt the motives, and ennoble the characters, which are intended to engage the sympathy of the reader, much above the standard of real life. In all but the most licentious and degraded of these publications, meanness, duplicity, and crime are reprobated, at least, to a certain extent, and the author pays homage — involuntary, it may be, in some cases — to purity and virtue. He may act under constraint in this respect, for he knows that men are constituted moral beings, and, though each individual may be indulgent enough to his own failings and vices, he is quick to perceive, and eager to censure the moral obliquity of another. Good and evil qualities are blended in the personages who come upon the stage; but the audience discriminate, unconsciously, perhaps, but with unerring tact, between those which are presented for regard and imitation, and those which are designed to be exposed to blame or contempt. Even of such an extreme case as Tom Jones, Mackintosh observes, that “the same book inspires the greatest abhorrence of the duplicity of Blifil, and of the hypocrisy of Thwackum and Square; and Jones himself is interesting by his frankness, spirit, kindness, and fidelity, — all virtues of the first class.” There is hardly any novel that does not incline to praise of romantic generosity, magnanimity, faithfulness, and refinement in love. The inventive faculty is prone to constant exaggeration. Imaginary pictures of virtue and vice are more highly colored, and presented with greater effect, than any exhibitions of them in real life; and the observer’s admiration of the one, and disposition to censure the other, are proportionally increased. Hence, we may perceive some reason for the opinion which is attributed to Turgot by his biographer; “He regarded romances as books of morals, and he even said, that in them alone had he found any true morality.”

For the purposes of this discussion, it has been acutely remarked, history and novels are on an equal footing. The moral influence of a story does not at all depend upon the question, whether it is true. It must be probable, indeed, or it will produce but little effect as an illustration; but, in all cases, the principle that is illustrated remains the same.

Noble and patriotic feelings are prompted by the consideration of some incidents, recorded by Livy, in the early history of Rome. Some inquirers have satisfied themselves, that this history is a mere collection of poetical legends and fables, and deserves little or no confidence. This discovery has weakened the force, but it has not altered the character, of the lesson which those reputed occurrences teach. Firmness and patriotism are still inculcated by the story of the elder Brutus, though it may be that such a personage never lived.

These views of the advantages of a familiarity with works of fiction, which are in substance those of Mackintosh, may be very philosophical, and very fine ; but they have much the air of an apology for a doubtful good, and they leave out of view the principal benefit, as it appears to us, to be derived from the perusal of such books. We regard novels as vehicles of instruction, — as furnishing the means of enlarging our experience, — as increasing our knowledge of men and things. This effect is not the chief object of the writer, we admit ; but he aims at it as subsidiary to his main purpose, and it is essential to his success. He designs to amuse the reader by a fanciful picture, the materials of which are drawn from real life. His characters are imaginary beings, but they are still human. They are types of a particular class of our species ; they are representations of our common nature, placed in peculiar circumstances, and acting under special influences, but few of which, probably, have ever fallen under our actual observation. They serve, therefore, to increase our knowledge of that nature. They are *studies*, in the artist's sense of that term, — not a particular portrait drawn from life, but a combination of the most familiar and striking traits that characterize a whole class, and forming, therefore, a better representation of that class than any faithful picture of an individual. We might say, if the paradox were not rather bold, that they are more true than the reality. Nature, in the exhaustless variety of her moods, never creates an accurate specimen of a whole species. In each particular case, the common traits are always blended with one or more peculiarities that distinguish the individual. It is the province of art to distinguish and remove these special features, and only by the proper execution of this design is it distinguished from servile imitation. The sculp-

tor, the painter, the poet, and the novelist, aim to set forth the ideal model, which seems to be the constant object of Nature's endeavour, although she always strikes a little on one side.

It is true, that this is only the general idea of imaginary composition, and an idea which, in most cases, is very ill carried out. But it should be remembered, that works of art are studies for the beholder as much as for the artist. The effort to detect the fault is quite as instructive, though not so delightful, as the contemplation of the perfect work. And it is wonderful with what facility the mind engages in this critical task, though it may not be able so readily to give an account of its own operations. A character or a scene in a novel is perceived, or rather it is felt, to be out of keeping ; the former is made to act from insufficient or unnatural motives, the latter is brought about in an improbable way. The reader *feels* the defect, we say, because, the naturalness of the whole work being injured, he receives less pleasure from the perusal. But only the acute and sagacious mind, or the practised observer, can tell precisely where the fault lies ; and the effort to distinguish it is at once the highest pleasure and the sharpest exercise of the faculties of taste. It is more consonant with our present purpose to observe, that the defect in point of naturalness is not at all attributable to the wholly fictitious character of the events described. The reader's pleasure is not diminished by the acknowledged want of reality, but by the accidental want of conformity to the end in view ; and this proves, that a reference is made throughout to a standard which is ideal, though it is also fixed and positive. The novelist aims at truth quite as much as the historian ; but, in the former case, the truth depends on conformity with the general principles of nature ; in the latter, on the faithful statement of particular facts. The writer of history brings together individual instances ; the writer of fiction sums up the results.

Every student of facts, whether occupied with the chronicles of former ages, or with travellers' accounts of distant climes, is constantly weaving romances in his own brain, — unconsciously, perhaps, and, in a greater or less degree, according to the liveliness of his imagination ; but in a way that is essential for the attainment of his chief purpose, which is, to gain as perfect a knowledge as is possible of the

truth. The page before him suggests as much as it actually tells. His fancy clothes the dry bones of history with substantial flesh and blood. The principal personages, whom the annalist describes almost as unconscious agents in a succession of events, as mere abstractions, are endowed by the reader with human passions and wants ; they are imagined by him in their leisure hours, in the midst of their companions, acting with the manners, and surrounded with the circumstances of the age. Different accounts are brought together ; various incidents and traits of character are recollected ; the gaps left by the imperfect chronicles are filled up in a manner consonant with the parts which are fully known ; and the result is a picture of some vividness and completeness, of which not more than half, perhaps, is authentic, in the strict sense of the term ; but, as a whole, it is far more correct and truthful than the dim and imperfect outline which is sketched by the historian. To an imaginative mind of sufficient compass and power, a few meagre events chronicled of an individual are like a few fossil bones in the hands of one skilled in comparative anatomy. They afford hints sufficient for the reconstruction of the whole creature ; and that not by a mere effort of fancy, but by close examination and sure reasoning from invariable correspondences and relations. The animal, says Cuvier, to the skeleton of which these bones belong, must have had such a form, such dimensions, and such habits ; its species is now extinct. The conclusion is wonderful, considering the narrowness of the *data* on which it rests. But it is not more strange than the reconstruction of historical characters by the poet, the dramatist, and the novelist.

Take Shakspeare's conception of Cleopatra, for instance, and consider how few materials are recorded by the writers of her times, from which we can judge of her character, and how perfectly they correspond to this gorgeous and animated portrait. History tells us only, that she was remarkable for her beauty and personal accomplishments ; that Julius Cæsar was subdued by her charms ; that she showed cowardice at the battle of Actium ; that Mark Antony forfeited half of the world for her sake ; and that she finally killed herself in order to avoid being led as a prisoner to grace the triumph of Augustus. The poet calls up from the shades the spirit who was capable of such things, and on

his immortal page she lives again, as fully known, as distinctly conceived, as if the reader had been an inmate of her palace through the whole of her reign. She actually moves before us, — this “rare Egyptian,” the “serpent of old Nile,” capricious, petulant, proud, fond, bewitching, the very creature born to dazzle, perplex, and fascinate all beholders, to lead the conquerors of the world in chains. It is no ideal portrait, no fancy sketch. Only such a being could have played the part attributed by history to the daughter of Ptolemy, and the paramour of Antony. We agree entirely with Mrs. Jameson, who has “not the slightest doubt, that Shakspeare’s Cleopatra is the real historical Cleopatra, individualized and placed before us.”

The exercise of imagination is, therefore, quite as necessary as judgment, care, and industry in collecting authorities and weighing testimonies, before we can arrive at complete historical truth. The imaginative writer plays a part which is supplementary to that of the historian, and in nowise inferior to it in importance. Who can doubt, that “good Queen Bess” is more fully, more vividly — ay, more truly — represented in “Kenilworth,” than in all the volumes of Hume and Lingard, or in the more ponderous tomes which contain the state papers of her reign? “The Fortunes of Nigel” have performed the same service for James the First, and readers are now familiar with every lineament of the royal pedant, the Solomon of England. Observe, also, that the merits of the novelist, in the communication of truth, are by no means limited to the fuller delineation of character. All the circumstances of past times, the manners, the habits, the modes of thought, the costume, the situation of the people, are described by him from the same materials, and with equal and important additions, made out in the same way, from the study of corresponding relations. Pure fiction, it is true, having no regard to such important purposes, is mingled by the author with what may be called the more authentic stuff, out of which he weaves his gay and party-colored fabric. But this practice only makes the lesson more pleasing, more impressive, and more easy to be remembered.

The preceding remarks apply only to historical fictions, which we have taken as the first instances wherewith to illustrate our position, only because their claims to consideration

and regard are more striking and more easily comprehended than those of romances of a different class. But the merits which we have now to consider are not the less real and positive, though they relate to a different study. Pure fiction is instructive, as it enlarges our knowledge of human nature, by exhibiting wider modifications of character, greater strife of passion, and changes effected by more sudden and striking alternations of fortune, than usually come under our observation in real life. Fortunately for our happiness, the great exigencies, which alone can develop the whole power of intellect, and strength of purpose and of action, that are lodged in man, are of rare occurrence. A knowledge of their effects would not be very useful to an individual, considered merely as a warning, or a preparation against their possible recurrence in his own case. The danger is too remote and uncertain; there is no necessity of guarding against it by special precautions. But the lesson which is taught by such stories has a wider scope, and is useful for more general purposes. Nothing is frivolous or unimportant which increases our acquaintance with the human heart, and shows how much man is capable of doing and suffering, when occasion calls. Here, again, the importance of the monition is not affected by the real or fictitious character of the events by which it is illustrated. The majesty of virtue is exhibited as impressively by Clarissa in the power of Lovelace, as by Socrates when drinking the hemlock, or Cato when directing his little senate at Utica. Isabella, pleading with Angelo for the life of her brother, teaches mercy and magnanimity as strongly as Volumnia entreating Coriolanus at the gates of Rome. And the latter story would lose nothing of its striking and solemn import, though a hundred Niebuhrs should prove it to be fabulous.

But the moral uses of fiction are so nobly displayed by Bacon, when treating of the nature and province of poetry, that we must borrow some of his weighty and magnificent sentences, though the passage is rather hackneyed as a quotation.

“The use of this feigned history hath been to give some shadow of satisfaction to the mind of man in those points wherein the nature of things doth deny it, the world being in proportion inferior to the soul; by reason whereof there is, agreeable to the spirit of man, a more ample greatness, a more exact good-



ness, and a more absolute variety, than can be found in the nature of things. Therefore, because the acts or events of true history have not that magnitude which satisfieth the mind of man, poesy feigneth acts and events greater and more heroical ; because true history propoundeth the successes and issues of actions not so agreeable to the merits of virtue and vice, therefore poesy feigns them more just in retribution, and more according to revealed providence ; because true history representeth actions and events more ordinary, and less interchanged, therefore poesy endueth them with more rareness, and more unexpected and alternative variations ; so, as it appeareth, poesy serveth and conferreth to magnanimity, morality, and to delectation. And, therefore, it was ever thought to have some participation of divineness, because it doth raise and erect the mind, by submitting the shows of things to the desires of the mind ; whereas reason doth buckle and bow the mind unto the nature of things."—*Advancement of Learning*, pp. 142, 143.

After listening to the music of such words, it seems like a harsh and dissonant transition, to descend to the inferior purposes which are answered by fictitious compositions. Yet, in striving to gain a complete view of the subject, we ought not to lose sight of these minor utilities, for they constitute nearly the only claim to respect which is offered by the popular novels of the day. These profess to be pictures of contemporary manners and real life, such as every one is able to observe in some degree, though he naturally seeks to increase his knowledge of them in every possible way. Putting aside the violently sentimental specimens of this class, and some fantastic works which display nothing but an ill-regulated imagination, it is safe to say, that much profit and delight may be gained from these productions. They represent men and manners with various degrees of success, and sometimes, it must be confessed, with no success at all. But even in the latter case we believe that they impose on nobody. The false pictures and caricatures, which they offer, are soon detected and rated at their true value. And the poorest of their species usually have some touch of nature, some spice of lively incident or faithful representation, which kindles sympathy, or leads to reflection. They teach us to sum up our own observations of life, in order to test the fidelity of a sketch by another hand. They enlarge the sphere of these observations, by directing our attention to points which might otherwise remain unnoticed. They

chronicle, for the benefit of posterity, certain characters, customs, and modes of thought, which are indigenous in this age, though they do not excite remark, because they are obvious, and frequently seen. Such works, therefore, are like copper coins, of trifling value when first issued, but of some convenience as small change, and destined to acquire much interest and importance in future times, as monuments of the age when they were struck.

The class of domestic novels, describing minutely and faithfully the interior of households in our own times, without aspiring to touch the higher chords of passion and sentiment, deserves special and honorable notice. Women have labored most successfully in this department, as might be expected from their finer tact, and power of keen and delicate observation. The moral which they teach, when not brought forward too obtrusively, is effective, and admits of a wide application. Founded on common events, it extends over a multitude of cases. Miss Austin's novels, for instance, are like Flemish paintings, in the curious fidelity with which scenes from real life are sketched, and like the admirable productions of Hogarth, in their ethical meaning and tendency. There is a singular charm in these descriptions of ordinary scenes and characters, which are found so dull and wearisome when the reality comes in our way, though the fictitious sketch is so delightful. Mr. Collins, Mrs. Norris, or Miss Steele, would be intolerable, if we were doomed to associate with them in actual life. Why do they become agreeable and interesting, when seen in the framework of fiction? The skill with which they are painted, the excellence of the imitation, does not wholly explain the problem; for characters of greater worth may be delineated with equal power, but without producing so great an effect. A landscape painter cannot render a flat and unmeaning prospect as pleasing as one which combines many points of striking scenery, though the imitation may be equally exact, the drawing and coloring equally faithful, in both cases. His success depends nearly as much on the choice of a subject, as in the art with which it is represented. The truth seems to be, that the writer of fiction carries the reader along with him by a fuller exhibition of motives and actions, and a deeper insight into character, than it is possible to obtain in real life. In ordinary cases, we can learn but half of the story from

actual observation ; we see but one aspect of the persons with whom we are thrown in contact. The novelist tells the whole. He introduces us behind the scenes, shows the means by which the effects are produced, and explains all the secrets of the machinery. We gain a full knowledge of the character without the labor of studying it, and without the tedious necessity of waiting for events by which it may be developed. In the common intercourse of life, we frequently meet with persons whose motives and proceedings are a riddle ; we are perplexed with events, the origin and nature of which cannot be perceived. The novelist supplies a key to the enigma, and his tale becomes interesting from its completeness. On the other hand, he who paints a landscape represents nothing which is not open to common observation. He must even confine himself to the most striking points of the scenery ; and, if there is nothing agreeable in the original, we shall find no pleasure in the imitation.

We have said nothing, thus far, of the many and grave faults which are chargeable upon numerous works of fiction, or of the pernicious consequences of indulging the habit of reading them to too great an extent, because these points are sufficiently obvious, and it was our object to show, that, in spite of these acknowledged drawbacks, there is much good produced by this class of compositions, and this good ought to be clearly perceived and fairly weighed before a sweeping verdict of condemnation is recorded against them. It requires no great penetration, nor any nice sense of morality, to perceive that the novels of Fielding and Smollet abound with coarse and licentious pictures ; that incorrect views of life are presented, and false sentiments of honor and pernicious principles of conduct recommended, in many of the popular romances of the day. Let these evils be duly considered, and proper caution be exercised in selecting the books designed to be put into the hands of those whose tender age or sex should be kept free even from the observation of impurity and sin, and, so far as may be, from the knowledge that such things exist. A broader field of study and recreation may be safely opened to people of mature minds and confirmed principles, acting either as lovers of polite literature, as students of human nature, or as inquirers after truth.

That it is not our intention to keep out of view the ob-

jectionable stuff, of which so many popular fictions are composed, is sufficiently apparent from the character of the books which we now proceed to notice. Few authors of his class offer so many points for just reprehension as Paul de Kock ; yet there are few whom it is so difficult to criticise with severity, on account of the many amiable and pleasant traits by which these faults are relieved. He is a merry rogue, an amusing vagabond, whom we cannot find it in our heart to scourge or to gibbet, though certainly he deserves to be sent to the House of Correction. He is a fellow of keen observation and infinite humor, whose pictures of vulgar manners and low life, always coarse and too often licentious, are still drawn with so much liveliness and truth, and presented with so much ease, gayety, and *nonchalance*, that the sternest reader cannot fail to be amused, and even to acknowledge some obligation to the writer, for imparting information respecting persons and scenes which one would hardly wish to visit and observe for himself. No sketches by foreign tourists, nor statistical details, nor formal reports to legislatures and benevolent societies, can give such vivid and correct notions respecting the situation, character, habits, and modes of thought of the middling and lower classes of the French people, as are presented in the pages of this prolific novelist.

The titles which we have placed at the head of this article designate but a small portion of his published writings. We have somewhere seen a list, that comprises no less than a hundred and twenty volumes of his novels, and several have been published since the date of that enumeration. A few of them are elaborately written, aiming to paint a variety of characters and a complexity of events, which should have the rich and diversified interest of regular romance. But such are not the most successful efforts of the author's talent, who rather appears in these stories to be feeling his way, and not to have attained his natural sphere of action. Most of his novels are mere sketches of contemporary manners, put together on a slight framework of incident, which can hardly be called a plot. Some volumes contain only unconnected pieces, probably made up from contributions to magazines and other periodicals, in which the farcical humor of the writer displays itself even to greater advantage than in the longer narrations. A few of these are in the form of

dialogues, and have been represented at the theatres, though not with such success as might be expected from the great popularity of the novelist.

How acceptable his writings are to the great body of his countrymen appears from the number of editions through which they have passed. Well thumbed copies of his novels may be found in nearly every shop, garret, and servant's lodge in Paris ; and if they are more rarely seen in drawing-rooms and gentlemen's libraries, the reason is not that fashionable and educated people have no relish for them, but that they prefer to put them in a corner, and read them in private. One great cause of this popularity is the perfect adaptation of the books to the people and the times. They are eminently national, and even local, in character ; much of the humor and satire, many of the scenes and personages described, being intelligible only to the Parisians. The style, also, is so perfectly French, abounding in modern idioms and conversational phraseology, that it is difficult to gain any idea of the writer's peculiarities through a translation. His finer qualities are quite too volatile to be transmuted ; they evaporate, in the process of change into another language. His novels form a mirror, in which nearly all classes of people in the gay metropolis may behold themselves, with just enough of defect in the glass to impart a comical twist or perversion to the reflected visage. A stranger, commonly, would see nothing in it but a grimacing and unnatural caricature.

It would be too much honor to Paul de Kock, to style him the "Boz" of the French capital. He has none of the fine humanity and broad sympathies of the English novelist, and but little of his dramatic art and moving pathos. But he possesses equal humor, equal skill in delineating all the aspects of a great city and the humbler households in it, and his sketches are marred by a similar inclination for broad caricature. The shop-keepers, laborers, and domestics in a great metropolis, — the "cockneys," if they may be called so, of Paris, — with their opinions, amusements, and habits, are hit off with as much spirit and fidelity by the Frenchman, as Dickens shows in describing their brethren in London. But Dickens is the poet of these people, while Paul de Kock is only their good-natured and laughing biographer. The former paints the sufferings and pleads the

cause of the indigent classes, even while he is amused with their ignorance, eccentricities, and follies. The latter contents himself with drawing ludicrous pictures of their sports and serious avocations, and of the half comical, half philosophical spirit in which they meet a change of fortune. His sketch has naturally a more smiling air, for a Frenchman bears misfortune and want with far more composure and good-humor than his surly brother across the Channel ; and the patience with which he endures privation and hardship in his own case, makes him regard with a more careless eye the woes of another. We do not mean, that our author is never serious, or that he has no power over the sacred source of tears. There are passages in his tales which are written with great feeling, and which call out the sympathies of the reader, at times, to a painful degree. But they are feeble in comparison with the touching pictures of Boz, which sometimes harrow the feelings as much as the sublime spectacle of Lear complaining to the tempests. Only in the lighter sketches and sportive moods of talent can any real parallel be instituted between the two writers.

We have not a word to say in defence of the coarseness and indelicacy with which the pages of this French son of Momus are loaded. It is no palliation to observe, that these features really belong to his subject, that vulgarity and licentiousness are stamped on the manners of so large a portion of the French populace, that no representation of them can be complete or accurate which leaves such features entirely out of view. The writer is to blame for an improper selection of materials, or, at any rate, for not making such use of them as may sufficiently indicate the facts in question, without trespassing on the delicacies of speech, or holding up immoral or corrupting pictures. It is one great merit of Dickens as a novelist, while handling similar subjects, and constantly treading on the very verge of that which would excite disgust, that he never steps over the line, nor gives offence by word, allusion, or description, to the most scrupulous delicacy. How much praise is due to him in this respect, especially when compared with Fielding, and Smollet, and some other writers of fiction very popular with a former generation, whose novels, admirable for the most part as works of art, and for wit, humor, and faithful delineations of manners, are now rightly consigned to obliv-

ion, because there is pollution in every page ! Our fathers read these books, and praised them, but men at the present day are ashamed to be seen with a copy in their hands. Such a character as Fielding's " Squire Western " has been defended, we know, on the ground, that it is a faithful portraiture of an English fox-hunting squire in George the Second's time. It may be so, though we question whether such a being ever had a daughter like Sophia Western. But what then ? The race has probably died out, and would have left no memorial behind them, if a coarse but able writer had not chronicled one to excite the disgust of posterity.

Paul de Kock bears a strong family resemblance to Fielding and Smollet, and, therefore, the present popularity of his stories shows, that the bulk of the French people, in respect to morality and true refinement, are more than half a century behind the English. Not that we would for a moment compare him with the former novelist in the artistlike construction of a plot, or the skilful development of a character. His more natural prototype, in these respects, is Smollet, whom he equals also in heartiness and coarse humor, and in raciness, though not in vigor, of style. The English reader, who is acquainted with " Roderick Random," and " Humphrey Clinker," has, perhaps, as just an idea of our lively Frenchman as it is desirable to obtain. He is a more fertile and careless writer than the Englishman, being probably incited by the applause and support of a larger circle of readers. His subject, also, is a more copious one, as Paris draws together a greater collection of originals, and the national character affords a wider range of amusing peculiarities than can be found on British soil.

Among a population like that of Paris, such books as these cannot do so much harm as in other communities. The causes, which produce the objectionable qualities in the light literature of the day, also deprive them of a part of their power to create mischief or offence. Gallantry and intrigue, there, seem to form in part the common business of life ; and a different law, which to foreigners appears much like no law at all, regulates the proprieties of speech and behaviour. People can hardly be injured by a representation in fiction of what is constantly before their eyes in reality. Yet it is evident, that we are even more shocked and

disgusted by a powerful exhibition in writing of the viler qualities of men and society than by the observation of these very qualities in real life, when the misfortune of our situation brings them constantly before us. What is actual appears to exist from necessary causes, or, at least, it is beyond our power to remedy ; and we mourn, and pass it by. But the portraiture of it in imaginative writing seems like a gratuitous revival or multiplication of the evil, and our indignant condemnation falls alike on the base spirits which furnish the poison, and the corrupted appetites which are fed by it. It is a noble characteristic of the taste and conscience of man, that they require in art a closer adherence to the principles of the beautiful, the just, and the right, than we can reasonably expect to be exemplified in nature and life. The *beau-idéal* is not found in the world ; poetical justice is confessedly unreal, — it does not follow merit and demerit in this stage of existence. But the restraint of circumstances is not felt in the province of invention, and, where man is the creator, he becomes responsible for the whole work. He is bound to “submit the shows of things to the desires of the mind.” If he cannot embody in his work that perfect beauty and absolute right, of which we dream, and to which we are constantly reaching forward, he is under an obligation, at least, to remove from it every thing that is base, deformed, ignoble, or impure.

We have already hinted, that it is difficult to give a correct notion of the writings of our author, because a meagre plot is hardly susceptible of analysis, the humor of the allusions and descriptions is often local in its effect, and many of his better qualities are so completely French, that it is impossible to represent them in another language. “*Sœur Anne*” is one of the more finished and least objectionable of his novels, and a few of the scenes are written with much feeling and pathos. M. de Montreville, a gentleman of rank and wealth at Paris, has one son, Frederick, a gentle and susceptible youth, whom he resolves to send away to travel for a time, that he may acquire some knowledge of the world, and forget an unfortunate attachment that he had formed at home. A travelling tutor is needed ; and the father selects M. Ménard for this purpose, a foolish pedant, much attached to the pleasures of the table, and a devoted admirer of people of high birth. But the son prefers a more lively companion for



the journey, and finds one in M. Dubourg, a careless spendthrift, who shows his wit in duping others, and often becoming a greater dupe himself. The stratagems and mishaps of this pleasant rogue, his success in overreaching the simple tutor, and his blunders, which involve the whole party in difficulties, are narrated with great spirit and humor, and agreeably diversify the graver incidents of the expedition. The father reasonably objects to such a person as a companion for his son, and Frederick is obliged to leave Paris attended only by Ménard, who is not acquainted with Dubourg. The latter hurries after them in a postchaise, in which he contrives to run against their carriage and upset them, and then politely offers them a seat in his own vehicle. Feigning to be a stranger to Frederick, he introduces himself as the Baron Potoski, a Polish palatine of immense wealth, and the simple tutor at once falls into the trap, treats the supposed nobleman with the utmost deference, and swallows, with unhesitating faith, all the incredible lies which Dubourg utters respecting his paternal estates and diplomatic mission. Some extravagantly ludicrous scenes take place at the miserable inn, where they pass the first night, which complete the deception on poor Ménard, who then eagerly ratifies an arrangement with the false baron, engaging him to accept a seat in Frederick's carriage, and become their companion for the rest of the journey. Only one difficulty remains, as the cautious parent had made Ménard the bearer of the purse, which was to defray the expenses of the whole party. But Dubourg plays upon the poor tutor's fears of highwaymen, till the frightened pedant at last consigns the funds to his keeping.

The party now proceed in great state, as the baron suits their expenses to his supposed rank, and the tutor has no objection to the magnificent dinners and suppers which are provided for them at the inns. When they arrive at Lyons, it soon appears how worthy the purse-bearer is of his trust, for he falls into the company of greater sharpers than himself, and is cheated out of every *sou*. After waiting till Frederick receives another remittance from his father, the three proceed to Grenoble, and at a village near that city, while watching the festivities of the peasants, Frederick becomes acquainted with the heroine of the tale.

"The travellers descended a little hill, and soon came to a valley enclosed by fir-trees and oaks. There were collected the inhabitants of a pretty village, which was just in sight at the end of the valley. It was a holyday, and the peasants were celebrating it by a dance in the open air. A pipe and tabor formed their whole orchestra, but these were quite enough to keep their feet in motion. Joy shone in every face. The peasant girls were arrayed in their smartest dresses; and the peculiar costume of this part of the country usually renders them sufficiently attractive. The elders were seated a little way off, chatting over their cups, while their children danced before them.

"Ménard seated himself at a table, and called for refreshments; Dubourg roamed about among the dancers, whispering soft words to the prettiest girls; and Frederick, after gazing at the scene for a while, sauntered away, and followed the course of a brook, which ran through a double row of willows, near the entrance of a thick wood. Already the sound of the pipe was heard but faintly in the distance, and he was about to turn back towards his companions, when he perceived, a little way off, a young girl seated beside the brook, her eyes turned towards the valley with an air of enchanting softness, and smiling at the dance which she watched from afar, though through the smile could be seen an expression of sadness, which appeared habitual to her.

"She seemed to be hardly sixteen years of age. Her dress indicated poverty, but it was neat and gracefully arranged. Rich, fair hair waved in curls around her open forehead; her features were regular and delicately formed, her mouth was pretty and bespoke an amiable disposition, and her deep blue eyes had a touching expression of softness and melancholy, which harmonized with the paleness of her complexion.

"Frederick stopped and watched her for some time. He could not be weary of such a sight. Why was she alone, beside the brook, while her companions were giving themselves up to pleasure and the dance? Whence that air of sadness which shaded her countenance? Frederick had seen her but for a moment, but he already felt an interest in her fate, and wished to know her history. It seemed as if his heart already shared her sorrows. Just then, several couples of the peasantry came along the path on their way to the dance. He spoke to some of the women, and, pointing to the girl beside the brook, 'Who is that pretty child,' he asked, 'and why does she not share your pleasures?' The countrywomen stopped, and turned a look full of sorrow and pity upon the maiden. Then they replied, 'O, Sir, the poor thing does not dance. It is Sister Anne.' The as-

tonished Frederick waited for farther explanation, but the women turned away towards the dancers, saying again, in a mournful tone, 'It is Sister Anne.' "

Frederick accosts the girl herself, but can obtain no answer. At last, after some difficulty, he finds a person who is acquainted with her circumstances, and he learns the history of *Sœur Anne*. Her mother, Clotilde, who had evidently lost a higher station in society by forming an unequal match, came with her husband to the village shortly after their marriage. At first, they had but this one child ; but when she was four years old, a boy was born, and Anne never quitted her brother. For some time, affairs went well with the parents ; but then misfortunes came, the harvest failed, and the despairing father enlisted in the army. News soon came that he was killed in battle, but no one dared to tell poor Clotilde, who watched for her husband's return long after his death was known. She passed whole days at the foot of a tree, where he had parted from her, and whence she could perceive the road from the city, by which she expected him to return. If reminded of her children, she answered sadly, " Anne is with her brother ; she never leaves him, and will be to him a second mother." In truth, the little girl, who was then but seven years old, astonished the whole village by her intelligence and her affection for her brother. She took care of him, rocked him, caressed him, and anticipated all his wants. The name of " Sister Anne " was the first that the infant learned to stammer, and all the peasants addressed her by that title, citing her as a model of sisterly love.

One stormy night, Clotilde did not return. The cottage was struck by lightning and set on fire ; and when the peasants were alarmed, and made a way through the flames into the chamber, they found Sister Anne crouched beneath her mother's bed, clasping in her arms the brother whom she hoped to preserve from death. They were carried out, and it was found that Anne had fainted, and the boy was dead. Anne was soon recalled to life, but the grief and terror which she had undergone had deprived her of the power of speech. When she opened her mouth, she could utter only low, moaning sounds ; and since that time she had remained dumb. Poor Clotilde was found dead at the foot of the tree, where she had spent so many days waiting

for her husband. Anne was now alone in the world, and destitute ; but a poor old woman, named Margaret, who inhabited a small hut in the wood, adopted her, and, from the charity of the neighbours, she obtained a cow and some goats. Time had soothed the violence of her grief, and she became gentle and tranquil, and would even smile at times, though an air of sadness always mingled with the expression of pleasure. At the sight of a boy of nearly the same age with her brother, she would show great emotion, and the tears would gush from her eyes. Her looks and gestures were so expressive, that the peasants easily understood her wants, and she was beloved by all.

This story was quite enough to captivate a youth like Frederick, who had romantic, tender, and susceptible feelings. Leaving his two companions to amuse themselves, he spent his whole time wandering about the fields with Sister Anne, and endeavouring to teach her to write, in which attempt he succeeded so far that she learned how to trace the letters of his own name in the sand. He supposed that he was acting only from compassion and sympathy, but a stronger feeling masters them both, and the poor girl is seduced, with hardly a consciousness of wrong on either side. Meanwhile, Dubourg and Ménard are pursuing their own amusements. They form an intimacy with a retired wine merchant, M. Chambertin, and his wife, whose passion for the society of people of rank is as great as that of the poor tutor. The supposed baron plays his part with great dignity and impudence, and the rich merchant entertains him with much ceremony at his house, to which all the notables of the place are invited. The writer's love of fun runs riot in the description of these worthies, and the most laughable scenes succeed ; but the farce is so broad and coarse, that we can transfer no portion of it to our pages. The unlucky intrusion of a former acquaintance at Paris puts an end to these enjoyments, and obliges Dubourg to decamp with speed. But he still contrives to hoodwink the simple Ménard, whose credulity is so great that nothing can open his eyes. The two companions now find themselves separated from Frederick, without any money in their pockets, and with reputations somewhat tarnished among the people of the vicinity. But Dubourg is never at a loss. He finds a miserable company of strolling players, and persuades his comrade to take

a place in it with himself. The rehearsal of a tragedy follows, and all the resources of the false nobleman are taxed to enable poor Ménard to sustain the character, for which he was but ill fitted, of a distinguished performer from Paris on a pleasure tour in the provinces. Their difficulties are brought to a climax, in the midst of the first representation, by the sudden appearance of M. de Montreville, who comes in search of his son, and finds the person, to whose grave charge he had been committed, arrayed in a most ridiculous costume, and on the point of making his *début* in a barn, before an audience of peasants, in the character of Theseus. The father obliges Ménard instantly to get into the postchaise with him, and, soon happening to meet with Frederick, who had walked from Margaret's hut to the village, he also is compelled, without any opportunity to apprise *Sœur Anne* of what had happened, to accompany M. de Montreville to Paris. Deserted by both his allies, Dubourg finds it necessary to quit the players even more suddenly than he had left the house of M. Chambertin; and, after some laughable adventures, in the character, which he assumes, of a quack doctor, he also succeeds in making his way back to the metropolis.

Frederick stands in such awe of his father, that he dares not speak of his *liaison* with the poor girl near Grenoble, though overwhelmed with anxiety for her fate. But M. de Montreville had received some hints on the subject from the poor tutor, and rightly supposing that the sated passion and susceptible heart of his son would soon find a new object, without communicating his purpose to any one, he goes back himself to the village, in order to find out the unfortunate girl, and to make amends, as far as was possible, for Frederick's misconduct. The consequences of Sister Anne's ill-starred love had become apparent, and she had, therefore, lost the respect and affection of the peasants. Made wretched by the inexplicable absence of her lover, after the death of Margaret, for whom with difficulty she obtains burial, she makes up her little bundle, and wanders forth into the wide world in search of the man whose very name she is unable to pronounce. Passing through a wood, she falls into the power of some brigands, by whom she is conducted to their hut, and, a few hours afterwards, M. de Montreville also comes there, ignorant of the character of the place, and

seeking refuge from an attack by another party of the same men. The events which follow remind one of the terrible robber-scene in a forest, described in Smollet's "Count Fathom." By her courage and quick wit, Sister Anne contrives to apprise M. de Montreville of his danger, and the two escape together to a neighbouring village, where she is placed in a good farmer's family, and every provision made for her future comfort and support by her grateful and pitying companion. The father had recognized in her the being whom his son had so foully wronged, but this fact is kept secret from her, as it was intended that she should never see Frederick again.

Returning to Paris, M. de Montreville finds, as he had hoped, that his son's affections are engaged to the lovely and amiable Constance, the daughter of his friend M. de Valmont. The arrangements being easily made, the marriage takes place, and the queerest figure at the nuptials is our old friend Dubourg, who, having received a small inheritance, is resolved to put away his wild and dissipated habits, and become a grave and moral man. Accordingly, on this joyful occasion, he kept such a serious face, that he seemed to have the spleen, and his manner and gait were those of a man sixty years old.

"What the deuce ails your friend Dubourg? Does he usually pass his time in the graveyards? I went up to him once or twice for the sake of conversation, and he recited to me five or six passages from Young's 'Night Thoughts,' and the 'Petit Carême' of Massillon. He is certainly a gay companion for a marriage."

The married couple are happy, except that the amiable Constance is alarmed and made a little jealous by observing, at times, that her husband became pensive and dejected, without any apparent cause. He was really disturbed by remorse and anxiety on account of *Sœur Anne*. Of this sad history, the wife is entirely ignorant. Meanwhile, in the family of the good farmer, the unhappy mute had given birth to Frederick's child, and, through her affection for the boy, the kind people succeeded in dissuading her for a time from engaging in a fruitless search for the father. By tracing the letters on the sand, she had induced them to call the child Frederick, and her silent love of him is described as mani-

festing itself in the most touching way. But, when he was nearly two years of age, she could no longer be restrained from setting out for Paris to seek for Frederick, having nothing to guide her but the written address of M. de Montreville, whom she knew only as a benevolent stranger, and hoped that he would assist her in tracing out her lover. It should be mentioned, that, after his marriage, Frederick had caused inquiries to be made for her at the village near Grenoble, but found that the peasants knew nothing except the fact, that she had disappeared after the death of Margaret. Sister Anne arrives at Paris, and falls into the hands of sharpers, who steal her purse containing the address, and abandon her in the streets. She is reduced to great misery, and gains a precarious subsistence for herself and child from the charity of casual observers. One day, during the absence of Frederick on a journey, Constance observes a poor woman in rags near her gate, tenderly caressing a beautiful boy whom she held in her arms. It was Sister Anne. Constance is interested by the sight, causes the stranger to be brought in, and, discovering that she is dumb, resolves to be the guardian and protector of her and the infant. Having no child of her own, she is particularly attracted by the aspect of the boy, in whom she fancies that she traces a resemblance to her husband. All their wants are supplied, and Anne is once more established in a safe and pleasant home. Frederick returns, and the following scene takes place.

“After the first moments were given to express the pleasure of meeting again, Constance said; ‘During your absence, I have taken into the house an unfortunate woman. O! I hope you will love her as I do.’ — ‘Every thing which you do is right, my dear Constance; your heart can never lead you astray. I am sure beforehand that you have bestowed your charity well.’ — ‘Ah! it is a young woman, and so interesting! a victim of love; and all of our sex can sympathize with such sorrows! Her seducer abandoned her and a dear little child, whom I dote upon. His name, like yours, is Frederick. But what ails you, my dear? You grow pale, you tremble.’

“‘It is the fatigue, perhaps; the hurry and excitement attending my return.’

“Frederick sat down, for his limbs failed him; what Constance had just said had caused an emotion which he could not restrain. He looked fearfully around him, as he asked, with a

trembling voice, 'And this woman, — this child, — where are they?'

"'She is lodged in the pavilion in the garden. But I see her. Come, come quick, my dear,' said Constance, running to meet Sister Anne, who was approaching with her son. 'My husband is returned. Now, nothing is wanted to complete my happiness.'

"Constance took the young mute by the hand, and drew her into the apartment where her husband still remained. On seeing Frederick, Sister Anne uttered a piercing cry; she ran and threw herself into his arms, and fainted as she pointed to her son. Frederick with one hand supported Sister Anne, whose head fell upon his breast, and with the other he covered his eyes, as if he feared to look around him. His son was at his feet; he still supported the mother; and Constance, astonished and trembling, stood before them. In a moment, a thousand different feelings seemed to agitate the wife of Frederick. She changed color; her eyes expressed surprise and anxiety; she shuddered, and seemed to make an effort to drive away the fearful thought which had just occurred to her. But her looks, fixed in turn upon Sister Anne and her husband, sought to penetrate the mystery. Her first impulse was to run to the young mute, and draw her out of Frederick's arms.

"'What ails her? What means this agitation on seeing you,' stammered poor Constance, as she looked at Frederick; 'answer me, then, do you know this young woman?'

"Frederick had no power to answer, or to look his wife in the face. But he saw his son, and, taking him in his arms, covered him with kisses. The heart of Constance seemed to yield to the shock, and the whole truth became manifest to her."

An explanation takes place, and the afflicted wife, mastering her own grief and jealousy by a strong effort, seems to resign Frederick to the affection of his first love. But the trial is beyond her strength, and M. de Montreville opportunely arrives to prevent farther difficulties. He succeeds in making the young mute understand the real state of affairs, and the necessity of leaving the house and seeing Frederick no more. Preparations are made for their departure the next morning; but an accident occurs during the night, which removes the perplexities of her friends, and puts a period to the sorrows of the unfortunate girl. The pavilion, in which she was lodged, takes fire, and Sister Anne, with her child, is in danger of perishing in the flames. In the agony of the



moment, a violent effort of nature bursts the bonds which had so long fettered her tongue, and she cries out, "Frederick, save thy child!" The household were already alarmed; and, as the cry reaches the ears of Frederick, he forces his way into the building, and bears out Sister Anne into the open air, with her child in her arms. The boy was unhurt, but the shock had been too great for the feeble frame of the unhappy mother, and she dies, blessing Frederick and Constance, and commending her son to their care.

Our sketch of *Sœur Anne* is quite imperfect, for it was necessary to pass very lightly over some of the most remarkable and characteristic passages. On the whole, it is a good specimen of the writer's abilities; for the plot has considerable variety and incident, many of the scenes are described with proper and deep feeling, and, though some portions are offensive to a pure taste and a nice sense of propriety, the general impression which the book leaves on the mind is favorable to virtue. Though the scene is laid, for the most part, at a distance from Paris, the characters are evidently drawn from the population of that gay city, with all the aspects of which, and the various classes of its inhabitants, our author is perfectly familiar. Dubourg may be met at any time on the *Boulevards*, M. Chambertin may be seen recommending his commodities for sale in many shops, or going with his wife to the *spectacle* in the evening, and we doubt not, that, due search being made through the attics of houses in the *quartier Latin*, a M. Ménard may be discovered by any one who is in want of a travelling tutor. Paul de Kock has a happy faculty, not only in seizing the general traits of the lower classes of his countrymen, their simplicity, frivolity, and good-humor, but in portraying with ludicrous fidelity the more remarkable features of an original, — the oddities which make up what is usually termed "a character," and thus setting forth a grotesque, but not unnatural, personage. He is a thorough student of eccentricities, and sometimes writes a whole novel with no other apparent purpose than that of exhibiting at full length one odd specimen of humanity.

*Un Jeune Homme Charmant* is written apparently with great earnestness of moral purpose, the design being to paint in strong colors the wretched career of a young man of fashion, vicious and heartless, who uses his remarkable ad-

vantages of person, wealth, and station in society, only for gaining illicit pleasures and dishonorable ends. The course and termination of such a life, devoted to mere sensual gratifications, and restrained by no considerations of honor or humanity, and the retribution that arrives, when the pleasant vices of youth become the scourges and the brand of maturer years, are depicted with considerable power. The character of her who becomes the victim of "the charming young man," and the incidental sufferings which are caused by his reckless conduct, are also forcibly represented. Unfortunately, the writer uses this moral framework, as it may be called, only as a means of holding up many gay and striking pictures of the scenes through which a fashionable young rake at Paris may be supposed to pass, and of the droll companions by whom he is often surrounded. In this way, the leading idea of the book is sacrificed to its accessories, and an abstract of the plot would give a very false notion of its contents. Indeed, the *forte* of this author lies in the vivid description of separate scenes, which are often but slightly attached to the main thread of the story. The most amusing personages are, not the actors in the plot, or those who carry forward the succession of events, but individuals who are casually introduced only to create a laugh by their peculiarities. Their characters or eccentricities are brought out in a single scene, so far as the author chooses to make use of them, and then they disappear from the story altogether. With such a disposition of materials, the novel appears diffuse and rambling to a great degree ; but it is still interesting as an animated and probably faithful delineation of manners.

Caroline, the heroine of this tale, is made to enlist the sympathies of the reader strongly by the wrongs that she suffers, and the powerful maternal affection which she displays ; but she forfeits them by practising a long continued deceit on a generous husband, and by a timid submission to injury, and a fatuity of conduct, which no reasonable being can pardon. Marianne, her patient and affectionate nurse and attendant, is a far more successful portrait. Indeed, our author seems always to improve, to sketch with greater freedom, variety, and truth, in proportion as he descends in the social scale for the characters and incidents of his fictions. He is quite at home in the cellars and garrets, but

he is ill at ease in apartments of greater pretensions, and appears like a very clown in a fashionable drawing-room. His chimney sweepers, street minstrels, and ignorant peasants, are capitally drawn ; persons in the middling classes are not so good ; and his people of rank and fashion are fairly detestable. The same remark may be applied to a large class of novel writers in some repute, whom it proves to be deficient in real nicety of discernment and delicacy of execution. Refinement, instruction, and good-breeding level outward differences, and reduce society to an apparently homogeneous mass, in which nothing but great tact and acute observation can detect various modifications of character and individual peculiarities. But, where artificial distinctions and observances do not exist, nature unfolds itself more freely, and puts forth such salient traits, that the artist can hardly fail to seize upon some of them in his work, and thus preserve at least a general resemblance to the original. Even Scott, who was a gentleman by instinct, and whose taste and partialities always leaned to the aristocratic side, describes the peasant much better than the lord, and generally makes the domestic a more interesting personage than his master. Paul de Kock is a vulgar fellow by nature, and might, therefore, be reasonably expected to fail in pictures of high life. There is a taint of coarseness and ill-breeding in his most successful sketches, which is not wholly redeemed by all his strength, vivacity, and humor.

*La Jolie Fille du Faubourg* has even less pretensions than either of the works which we have noticed, to be considered as a regular fiction, or as a book from which any profitable lesson might be derived. To the lover of broad fun, it offers a succession of lively pictures, which might move a monk of La Trappe to laughter, and which are eminently characteristic of the writer, and of the populace for whom they are drawn. Yet the proper heroine of the story, though she occupies only a small portion of it, is an interesting and even a lovely character, showing more purity of conception, and a nicer handling, than one would expect from so coarse a mind. Marguerite is the daughter of a man once in reputable standing, who gained a decent livelihood and the means of giving her a tolerable education, through his labors as a clerk in a banking-house. Nearly alone in the world, having no relatives, and few acquaintances, they find content and

happiness in the proper use of a modest income, and in strong mutual affection. But the banking-house is broken open at night, and a large sum of money stolen, under circumstances which appear conclusively to fix the guilt upon the father. He is tried and found guilty, but, in consideration of his former excellent character, is sentenced only to six years' detention, — a milder kind of imprisonment. The daughter, reduced to indigence, and shrinking from notice on account of the shame of her father's situation, supports herself as a seamstress, and appears in pleasing contrast with the crowd of girls in a similar occupation, of joyous manners, and rather doubtful character, in the midst of whom she is obliged to live. The mode of life within doors, the labors and amusements, of these lively *grisettes*, afford wide scope for the pencil of our city Hogarth, who describes them with admirable spirit and humor, paying far more attention to them than to the principal personage of his story.

Marguerite finds a lover in Alexis Ranville, a young man of good connexions and education, and correct principles, but of the same timid and susceptible character as the Frederic of the former novel. He appears, at first, suffering under an unlucky passion for his cousin, Helen Brevanne, a brilliant coquette, who only amuses herself with the romantic feelings and the awkwardness of her former playmate. A masked ball, to which she invites him only for the sake of betraying him into the most ridiculous acts and situations, for the amusement of her company, affords room for one of those laughable sketches in which our author takes so great delight. Durozel, the friend of Alexis, engages that he shall have his revenge on the spoiled beauty, and, for that purpose, and in order to divert his melancholy, seeks to impart to him ease of manner, and knowledge of society, and to make him acquainted both with high and low life at Paris. The novel is made up chiefly from the events connected with the progress and success of this scheme, a copious store of materials being thus opened for the agreeable and discursive talent of the writer. One of the excursions thus prompted by Durozel is to a party and dance, given, after their fashion, by a number of the seamstresses, and this scene, also, is depicted with great spirit, in the way of broad, though not licentious, drollery. In the house tenanted by them, though not in their society, Alexis meets with Mar-

guerite, and is captivated by her beauty, gentleness, and reserve, and the quiet resignation with which she bears misfortune. His passion for this poor girl, leading him to attribute less importance to other scenes and characters, enables him to acquire the confidence and tact which are requisite for success in fashionable life, and at last he triumphs signally over his cousin, when he had ceased to care for her, or for the people by whom she is surrounded.

It is not worth while to follow out the events by which this end is produced, or those through which Alexis finally discovers and proves the innocence of the father of Marguerite, and, having thus rescued her name from reproach, obtains her hand in marriage. We have said enough to give a general idea of the plot, and of the way in which the author uses it to introduce those broad delineations of low life in Paris in which he excels. We have vainly tried to find in this novel, and in several others by the same author, some passage, which, even under the disadvantage of a translation, might give, without offence to taste or purity, some notion of the comic talent of Paul de Kock. The serious portions do no justice to his abilities, and would not account for his popularity; and the remainder is so tainted with coarseness, and sometimes with what is worse, that we cannot spread any part of it before our readers. It does not appear that there is any perverseness or obliquity of opinion or sentiment about our author. He does not make war upon the laws of society. He has no new code of morals to recommend, by which virtues and vices shall change places with each other in the estimation of the world. On the contrary, he often shows a proper appreciation of true moral worth, a due discrimination of motives and actions, and a sympathy with suffering virtue. His principles are sound, except in his carelessness with respect to one vice, which exerts a wide and blasting influence over French manners; but his taste is corrupt. His wit is of the earth, earthy; his humor has all the pollutions of the kennel. A strange obtuseness of perception appears to beset him in reference to most of the decencies of life and language, the consequence of which is, that his sketches excite disgust quite as frequently as laughter. He has even a preference for wretched vulgarity, and seems to grovel, when the subject would naturally tempt him to soar. The prevalence of

this vile trait in his later writings, and the continued popularity of his works, compel us to believe, that, in this respect, he is only adapting himself to the taste of his countrymen, and that the populace for whom he writes cannot be degraded even by his influence.

The other publications on our list only confirm the view which we have endeavoured to give of the characteristics of Paul de Kock as a novelist, and we can, therefore, pass over them very briefly. *Ni Jamais ni Toujours*, and *Mon Voisin Raymond*, might each be entitled — Passages from the life of a dissipated young man of talent and fortune in Paris. They contain much lively and humorous writing, and some pleasant adventures, though the author copies from himself at times, and the sketches which he presents are recognized as old acquaintances. The field which was open to him in the gay and brilliant city, with its thousand contrasts and shifting scenes, and its laughter-loving inhabitants, though a broad and fertile one, had already yielded him much fruit, and, in his later publications, he appears, at best, to be only gleaning after an abundant harvest. He has, in truth, but a slender vein of invention, and appears to best advantage as an imitator, in making a faithful copy of what is actually before his eyes. And, even in this task, he is most successful, when not obliged to string together the scenes into a connected story, but when each subject stands by itself, and single incidents and characters are not worked up into an elaborate narrative. The two volumes of *Les Mœurs Parisiennes* are filled with such unconnected pieces, and may be reckoned among his most successful and amusing publications. Many of them are quite equal to the best of the “Sketches” of London life, for which we are indebted to Boz.

We have had some scruples about laying before our readers such an account of the light literature of France at the present day as is given above, and in former articles upon the writings of George Sand, and Alexandre Dumas. The question may be asked, Why take any notice of books, which, however indicative of a certain kind of talent, are not suited to the English or American taste, and contain much objectionable and offensive matter? Our answer is, that these publications, with all their faults, are curious, both as a warning and a study; they tell us something respecting

the workings of a depraved taste and imagination, and they throw much light on the character, situation, and opinions, of a large portion of the reading population of France, where they enjoy a great and rapidly increasing popularity. They are as significant, in their way, as were the writings of reflecting and speculative men among the French, just before the outbreak of the revolution of 1789. They show what ideas are simmering in the great cauldron of Paris, and what must be expected, when the fire shall burn more fiercely, and the contents of the vessel shall rise to the surface and overflow. Novels and newspapers constitute nearly all the intellectual food of a great multitude of readers, which is daily increasing, in consequence of the widely diffused means of public education and the cheapness of printing, and the character of these publications is at once an index and a cause of the state of opinion and sentiment among the people to whom they are addressed. Whatever grossness and immorality, whatever licentious speculations upon society, politics, and religion, they may contain, they reflect but too faithfully the moral and intellectual condition of those who read them ; and, in proportion to the energy and ability with which they are written, they heighten the very evils which they reveal. It is a source of some consolation and pride, to reflect, that, whatever may be the faults chargeable upon cheap publications of a similar class in the English language, they are far purer and better, more sound in principle and healthy in tone, than the works which are now issuing in great profusion from the Parisian press.

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ART. III. — *The Student-life of Germany*. By WILLIAM HOWITT. From the unpublished MS. of Dr. Cornelius. Containing nearly forty of the most famous Student-Songs. Philadelphia : Carey & Hart. 1842. 8vo. pp. 467.

THE title of this book will, no doubt, bring up to the minds of most of our readers a vision of young men, assembled together in Universities, with ample libraries and distinguished professors, from whom they learn, that to give two-